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INL awards \$10,000 classroom makeover grant to Caldwell school

IDAHO FALLS — Washington Elementary School in Caldwell will receive a \$10,000 classroom makeover thanks to a grant from Idaho National Laboratory. The lab also has awarded approximately \$60,000 in grants to teachers across the state to improve science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education in grades K-12.

The team of first grade teachers at Washington Elementary who submitted the winning grant application will use the \$10,000 to purchase Mimio Interactive Boards to integrate math and science and promote higher levels of engagement and learning through real-life experiences. With the equipment, students will have an opportunity to learn through virtual field trips, web quests and interactive lessons.

INL awarded two Extreme Classroom Makeover grants; the other went to Shoshone Bannock High School in Fort Hall. The \$10,000 awards support classroom instructional resources, materials and laboratory equipment used to integrate STEM concepts across all disciplines.

Additionally, the lab's Mini Grant program provides teachers up to \$2,000 per proposal for classroom equipment, materials and professional development projects. Thirty-nine grants have been awarded this year to support innovative STEM projects throughout Idaho. Nearly \$10,500 worth of awards went to southwest Idaho teachers this year.

The following is a list of 2010 Mini Grant recipients in southwest Idaho:

- Brandon Hampton, Les Bois Junior High School in Boise, will receive \$1,115 for tools and equipment for engineering and construction labs for students to complete hands-on engineering projects.
- Susan Harrington, Rolling Hills Public Charter School in Boise, will receive \$2,000 for microscopes for hands-on observation and study of plant and animal cells.
- Carmen Larrinaga, Melba Elementary School, will receive \$512 for stream tables and manuals for students to demonstrate and study stream velocity, stream load and the erosion cycle.
- Chad Rawlins, Melba High School, will receive \$1,500 for binoculars and field guides for a bird diversity project for students to experience and study biodiversity, food webs, habitat, population densities and behavioral adaptations.
- Vana Richards, Carberry Intermediate School in Emmett, will receive \$2,000 for a "Bug Zoo," for 5th grade science students to observe bug behaviors; study life cycles of insects; develop habitat; and record, analyze and present data.
- Lynnea Shafter, Heritage Middle School in Meridian, will receive \$1,000 for atomic model sets for students to create and study atomic structure and relationships between the atom, elements, compounds and mixtures.
- Elisabeth Sonerson, Galileo Math and Science Magnet in Eagle, will receive \$340 for supplies for students to grow and pollinate plants to learn about plant reproduction and genetics.
- Linda Stokes, Collister Elementary in Boise, will receive \$2,000, for "Down to Earth Science," a special project for students to explore the environment using geological testing models, identification of rocks and minerals and field tests.

Grant applications are evaluated by a panel of judges based on specific criteria. Teachers are required to provide information on how learning objectives and curriculum concepts will be enhanced and how the project will bolster student interest and achievement.

Funding for INL's Mini Grant program comes from Battelle Energy Alliance, a nonprofit organization that operates the lab for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).

In 2009, INL contributed a total of \$473,000 to local and regional K-12 programs that promote STEM education and encourage students to pursue careers in these areas. Over the past four years, INL's Education Programs office has contributed nearly \$1.7 million to enhance STEM education. That includes 166 grants totaling more than \$330,000.

INL is one of the DOE's 10 multiprogram national laboratories. The laboratory performs work in each of DOE's strategic goal areas: energy, national security, science and environment. It also is the nation's leading center for nuclear energy research and development.

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